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UNHCR'S EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

I. PURPOSE AND LOCATION OF THE EVALUATION FUNCTION

1. Evaluation in UNHCR is an instrument of organizational learning, accountability and change. It forms part of a broader framework of activities, including inspection, monitoring and audit, that are intended to enhance the organization's effectiveness, efficiency and impact. These activities, and their relationship to each other, are described in a separate information paper (EC/50/SC/INF.6).

2. The evaluation function is located in the Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit (EPAU), which was established in September 1999. EPAU has been placed within the Department of Operations, where it reports directly to the Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees.

3. The establishment and location of the new unit represented a response to a growing perception by UNHCR and its key partners of the need to strengthen the capacity and impact of the evaluation function. It also represented a recognition of the need for the process of policy analysis and formulation in UNHCR to be more directly informed by systematic reviews of programmes, projects and practices in the field.

4. With the establishment of EPAU, the staffing of the evaluation function has been strengthened, while substantially increased funding has been made available for independent consultancies. UNHCR also hopes to reinforce the capacity of the unit by means of joint evaluations involving personnel from governments, other international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

II. EVALUATION POLICY AND PROCEDURE

5. With the establishment of EPAU in 1999, UNHCR introduced a new evaluation policy, based on the principles of transparency, independence, consultation and relevance. As one of the first steps in application of this

policy, UNHCR declassified all of its previous evaluation reports and posted those issued during the past four years on a new "Evaluation and Policy Analysis" page of the UNHCR website, http:///www.unhcr.ch/evaluate/main.htm. The page also contains the EPAU mission statement, details of UNHCR's evaluation work programme, regular updates on evaluation projects and direct links to a number of other websites concerned with the evaluation of humanitarian activities. EPAU also provides interested parties with updates on evaluation activities, including information on consultancy opportunities, by means of its e-mail list.

6. An Evaluation Committee has been established to support and guide UNHCR's evaluation function. Chaired by the Inspector General, it comprises senior staff of other headquarters sections involved in organizational learning, oversight, and management systems activities. A principal function of the Committee is to ensure that evaluation findings are effectively followed up and incorporated into UNHCR's policymaking, planning and training procedures. The Evaluation Committee also provides a means of ensuring that coordinated follow-up action is taken with respect to external evaluations of UNHCR's programmes.

7. In addition to the Evaluation Committee, individual Steering Committees are established for each evaluation project, on which key stakeholders within UNHCR are represented. These Steering Committees act as panels for the selection of independent consultants and consultancy companies, and also provide a structure for follow-up to evaluation projects, once completed.

8. A number of initiatives are being taken to further enhance the evaluation function in UNHCR. An additional post will be established in EPAU. Evaluation training will be provided for EPAU staff and other UNHCR personnel with a professional interest in the evaluation function. The newly-established evaluation consultancy roster will be expanded, and additional steps will be taken to ensure the effective dissemination of evaluation findings. With funding provided by a donor government, an expert has been engaged to recommend ways of planning the evaluation work programme more systematically and integrating evaluation findings more effectively into UNHCR's planning, programming and policy-making procedures.

9. UNHCR will continue to consult closely with its governmental and non-governmental partners on its evaluation activities, involving them directly in the evaluation process where possible. Drawing upon consultations with these partners, some of which will take place in the context of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme meeting, EPAU will establish a flexible, medium-term evaluation work programme.

10. The evaluation work programme will include evaluations of several major UNHCR programmes and functions, while leaving EPAU with sufficient capacity to respond to changing events and short-term demands. UNHCR's evaluation and policy analysis activities will be coordinated so as to maximize the synergy between the two. A summary of recent, current and planned evaluation projects is provided below. A provisional evaluation plan is also provided in abbreviated form as an annex to this paper.

III. EVALUATION PROJECTS

11. The major evaluation undertaken last year was a review of UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response in the Kosovo refugee crisis. Commissioned by UNHCR in mid-1999, at a time when that crisis was still in full progress, the evaluation was undertaken by an independent team of experts, who presented their preliminary findings at a two-day meeting of stakeholders in November 1999.

12. The Kosovo evaluation report was published in February 2000 and discussed at the seventeenth meeting of the Standing Committee of the Executive Committee. A separate paper is being made available to the Executive Committee, and will be posted on the "Evaluation and Policy Analysis" page of the UNHCR website, providing details of follow-up to the recommendations of the Kosovo report (EC/50/SC/INF.5).

13. As that paper explains, the findings of the Kosovo evaluation played a major part in the formulation of UNHCR's plan of action to strengthen its emergency preparedness and response capacity, as well as its efforts to enhance the security of refugee-populated areas. By undertaking "real-time" evaluations of future emergency operations, UNHCR hopes to provide speedy feedback to senior management and thereby further strengthen the organization's performance in this area.

14. UNHCR's recent, current and planned evaluation activities are clustered around a number of the organization's key policy and programme concerns. The issue of *refugee security and protection* is a top priority, and in that respect UNHCR has undertaken a study of violence in the refugee camps of Kenya and is undertaking an evaluation of its "security package" in the United Republic of Tanzania. On the basis of these and other reviews, EPAU assisted with the formulation of a paper on measures to operationalize the "ladder of options", discussed by the Standing Committee at its eighteenth meeting (EC/50/SC/INF.4).

15. In the next 18 months, UNHCR intends to commission three independent evaluations in the area of refugee security and protection: an evaluation of UNHCR's firewood distribution project in Dadaab, Kenya, which is intended to reduce the incidence of sexual violence experienced by refugee women; a global review of the impact of UNHCR's activities in relation to the protection needs and rights of refugee children; and an evaluation of the implementation of UNHCR's guidelines on the protection of refugee women.

16. UNHCR's policy for refugees in urban areas constitutes another central theme of the evaluation work programme. At the beginning of 2000, a preliminary, desk-based evaluation of the policy and its implementation was undertaken, followed by a field-based review of UNHCR's programme in New Delhi. The unit also intends to undertake or commission reviews of UNHCR's programmes in Cairo and Nairobi. On the basis of such reviews, UNHCR's 1997 policy document on refugees in urban areas will be reconsidered and, if necessary, reformulated.

17. Three projects have been initiated in relation to the reintegration of returning refugees: a global review of Quick Impact Projects, focussing on the identification of best practices; a lessons-learned workshop on reintegration in Guatemala, undertaken in association with the Regional Bureau for the Americas; and a lessons-learned workshop on reintegration in

South-East Asia, organized by the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific. A historical review of efforts to link short-term relief with longer-term development both in countries of asylum and in countries of origin was prepared by EPAU, which is also contributing to the work of UNHCR's Reintegration and Local Settlement Service in relation to the Brookings Process.

18. Working closely with UNHCR's Health and Community Development Service, EPAU has established a programme of operationally relevant research in the area of refugee education. Studies to be produced by early 2001 include analyses of "peace education" programmes in East African refugee camps; education and refugee repatriation in former Yugoslavia; the quality of education in refugee contexts; and education in emergency situations.

19. UNHCR has in recent months devoted a considerable amount of attention to its policy in relation to internally displaced persons. As well as acting as secretariat to the organization's IDP Task Force on this issue, EPAU produced an inventory of UNHCR's operational involvement with internally displaced persons and a policy options paper for the High Commissioner. The unit plans to undertake a joint evaluation of the UNHCR programme for internally displaced persons in Sri Lanka, with a three-person team comprising a UNHCR staff member, an NGO, and a government representative.

20. An evaluation has recently been completed on the issue of minimum standards and essential needs in the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. Building on this review, EPAU hopes to undertake or commission evaluations of other UNHCR programmes in protracted situations of displacement.

21. Other evaluation projects in progress or recently completed, include:

- An independent evaluation of UNHCR's role in strengthening national NGOs;
- A joint evaluation of UNHCR's role in relation to nationality and statelessness issues;
- An evaluation of UNHCR's training activities with implementing partners and government counterparts;
- An assessment of the implementation of the programme of action of the CIS conference process; and,
- An assessment of the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding between UNHCR and International Organization for Migration.

IV. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

22. UNHCR places particular importance on the development of new evaluation methodologies. This emphasis has two main aims: to reinforce the impact of the evaluation function within the organization, and to contribute more broadly to the enhancement of evaluation standards in the United Nations system and the humanitarian sector. In pursuit of the latter objective, UNHCR plays an active role in the Inter-Agency Working Group on Evaluation, as well as the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Assistance (ALNAP), which brings together the evaluation

specialists of many international, governmental and non-governmental organizations.

23. In developing new evaluation methodologies, UNHCR undertook a "real-time" evaluation of the organization's response to the Eritrea/Sudan crisis in July 2000, which entailed sending an EPAU staff member to the field at a time when UNHCR's emergency operation was still being launched. UNHCR also commissioned a review of participatory and beneficiary-based evaluation techniques, and has established a pilot project to evaluate UNHCR's programme in Guinea using such techniques. The value of these new approaches will be assessed upon completion of these projects.

24. UNHCR is strongly committed to joint and inter-agency evaluations, and has reached an agreement with OCHA, UNICEF and WFP which should allow the four agencies to undertake at least one major joint evaluation each year. The first of these evaluations, planned for late 2000 and early 2001, is likely to focus on the United Nations system's humanitarian programmes in Afghanistan.

UNHCR'S PROVISIONAL EVALUATION PLAN
(September 2000 - September 2001)

The following plan provides an indication of the evaluation projects and papers that UNHCR expects to complete in the coming months. Estimated completion dates are also provided. The plan does not purport to be exhaustive, and may be revised on the basis of changing events and priorities, consultations with key partners and the availability of resources.

Emergency preparedness and response

"Real-time" evaluation of the Eritrea/Sudan emergency, (September 2000)

UNHCR's follow-up to the independent evaluation of the Kosovo crisis, (September 2000)

Refugee security and protection

Independent evaluation of UNHCR's firewood distribution project in Dadaab, Kenya, and its impact on the problem of sexual violence, (February 2001)

Independent evaluation of the impact of UNHCR's activities in relation to the protection needs and rights of refugee children, (May 2001)

Independent evaluation of the implementation of UNHCR's guidelines on the protection of refugee women, (September 2001)

Refugees in urban areas

Evaluation of UNHCR's policy on refugees in urban areas: a case study review of New Delhi, India, (October 2000)

Evaluation of UNHCR's policy on refugees in urban areas: a case study review of Cairo, Egypt, (March 2001)

Evaluation of UNHCR's policy on refugees in urban areas: a case study review of Nairobi, Kenya, (March 2001)

The reintegration of returning refugees

Evaluation of Quick Impact Projects: lessons-learned and best practice, (October 2000)

Report of a lessons-learned workshop on Guatemala, (October 2000)

Report of a lessons-learned workshop on South-East Asia, (January 2001)

Refugee education

Independent study of education initiatives in emergency situations, (February 2001)

Independent study on quality issues in refugee education, (February 2001)

Independent study of "peace education" programmes in East Africa, (February 2001)

Independent study of education and repatriation in former Yugoslavia, (February 2001)

Other projects

Evaluation of UNHCR's training activities with implementing partners and government counterparts, (September 2000)

Evaluation of minimum standards and essential needs in Kakuma, Kenya, (September 2000)

Independent evaluation of UNHCR's role in strengthening national NGOs, (November 2000)

Joint evaluation of UNHCR's role in relation to statelessness and nationality issues, (February 2001)

Joint evaluation of the UNHCR programme for IDPs in Sri Lanka, (March 2001)

Joint assessment of the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding between UNHCR and IOM, (March 2001)

Participatory evaluation of the UNHCR programme in Guinea, (December 2000)